

## 20.10.24 The Pandemic Election Hour.wav

SM Sarah McConnell  
AS Audio Sample  
GD Gilda Daniels  
JV Jennifer Victor  
RD Rosalyn Cooperman

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**SM** American children learn about voter suppression in history class. They learn about the poll taxes and the literacy tests that were used to stop African-Americans from voting during the Jim Crow Era. But across the country right now, activists are fighting to show that voter suppression is not just our history, it's our present. Here's Stacey Abrams, the 2018 Democratic candidate for Georgia's governor, talking about that election this year.

**AS** More than 200 years into Georgia's democratic experiment, the state failed its voters. You see, despite a record high population in Georgia, more than a million citizens found their names stripped from the rolls by the secretary of state, including a 92-year-old civil rights activist who had cast her ballot in the same neighborhood since 1968. Tens of thousands hung in limbo, rejected due to human error and a system of suppression that had already proven its bias. Democracy failed Georgia. Georgians of every political party, every race, every region, again.

**SM** From Virginia Humanities, this is With Good Reason. I'm Sarah McConnell. Today on the show, the barriers that keep Americans away from the polls. But first, over the last couple of weeks, we've asked friends and neighbors to tell us why they vote. And throughout the show today, we're sharing some of those reasons with you.

**AS** This is Sarah and I'm calling from Arlington, Virginia. I'm voting for a more inclusive, diverse and open community. I'm raising young kids. I need them to know that they are welcome, that they are cared for, that they are loved by their community, their small community here at Arlington and their larger community of this country.

**AS** Hi, I'm Maria. I vote because the women who came before me fought in order for me to have this right. I also vote so that everyone, regardless of sexual orientation, race, citizenship status and other factors are treated fairly and that we all enjoy a decent standard of living. I vote so that future generations will breathe clean air and drink uncontaminated water. And finally, I vote to preserve our democracy.

**AS** Hi, my name is Shawn and I vote because my grandfather was a Marine in World War Two and fought for that right.

**AS** Carolyn Cades, Albemarle County, Virginia. I'm voting for my mom who used to get dressed up and take me to our polling place when I was a little girl in the mid-1950s. She took me into the booth with her and showed me how she voted. It felt like a very sacred and special occasion, and I've rarely missed an election ever since.

**SM** Thank you, Carol and to all of you called in. And we're not done collecting your stories. Give us a call at 434-253-0396 and tell us why you vote. In her 2020 book, "Uncounted: Voter Suppression in the United States", Gilda Daniels has a chart of voter suppression tools. She argues that voter I.D. laws are really just poll taxes by a different name and that

voter deception is just an updated version of a literacy test. Daniels served as a deputy chief in the Department of Justice Civil Rights Division Voting Section under both the Clinton and Bush administrations. Now she's a professor at the University of Baltimore School of Law and the director of Litigation for Advancement Projects National Office. She joins me in partnership with Virginia Humanities, Virginia Festival of the Book. Gilda, you start your book with a story about your grandfather. Tell me the story about how he would wake you up on Saturday mornings from the porch.

[00:04:16]

**GD** It's a wonderful memory. As a child, when we would stay overnight with my grandparents, my maternal grandparents, my grandfather would wake us up by coming into the room and saying, you're sleeping at a dangerous time. And of course, I had absolutely no idea what he was saying because I'm a child of the South. So we have a lot of colloquialisms and I'm just like, OK, I don't know what that means, but I think it's time for me to get up, but it was certainly as I grew older and when I was writing the book, that came back to my memory and I could analogize it to where we are, where I see and believe that we are as a country in regards to the state of slumber that we are in. That while we are sleeping, there are forces that are working for our demise, particularly in the area of voting. So for 400 hundred years African-Americans have been on these shores, but we've only been voting for 55.

**SM** Right.

**GD** In the book, I use my grandmother as a framework for these cycles of voter suppression, right. We have these cycles of progress and cycles of regress. And I use her because in talking to her, I realized wait a minute, we have these like 100-year cycles. My Medea, which is my grandmother, whom I affectionately called Madea, which is short for mother dear, lived to be 99. She was born in 1919, and we - we know that in 1920, women were granted the right to vote because we've celebrated 100 years of the 19th Amendment this year. Madea did not vote until the 1960s. She did not vote until the 1960s because she was African-American woman who live in the South. You had the 15th Amendment, which says you cannot discriminate based on race. And here, the 19th Amendment, which says you can't discriminate based on gender when it comes to the right to vote. But even in the face of the 15th and 19th Amendments, Black and brown people in the south, men and women, could not enjoy the right to vote because all the devices that were put in place - poll taxes, literacy tests, vouchers, the grandfather clause, economic terror, like you could lose your land. My grandfather was a sharecropper - you could lose your land if you exercise the right to vote. And violence, right. People died because they were trying to exercise their right to vote. There were massacres in Colfax, Louisiana and other parts of the south around the right to vote and people exercising their - their right to vote. We know that the people were killed in the 50s and 60s for registering people to vote.

**SM** Did you ever get a chance to ask your grandmother why she didn't vote until she was in her 40s?

**GD** I did ask her. I asked her and she said Black people didn't vote. And it wasn't because they didn't want to, it was because of the fear that was associated, so the intimidation that occurred. People knew that you could, you know, that you could lose your life, lose your job in places like Louisiana. In the 1900s, when Louisiana passed these restrictive laws where they had more than a hundred thousand Black men registered during the reconstruction period. During the redemption period, where white supremacists and

segregationists sought to return the South to white men, those numbers went from one hundred thousand to a thousand.

**SM** Really, that low?

**GD** And it's even lower in places like Alabama in 1896, there were 146,000 Black men who were registered. By 1906, there were 46 in the state of Alabama.

**SM** You don't mean forty-six thousand.

**GD** I mean less than 50 people.

**SM** How could that be?

**GD** Poll taxes, literacy tests, the grandfather clause was a big one right at that time, because the grandfather clause - they made a law that said you can vote if your grandfather was able to vote before - and the date was - before the passage of the 15th Amendment.

**GD** And so, you know, it was very effective. They put these measures in place and they said their intent during that period was to eliminate every one of them, eliminate every Black man who was registered, eliminate them from the voter rolls.

**SM** The grandfather clause was passed around what era?

**GD** In the redemption period, which is post reconstruction, early 1900s.

**SM** So what you're saying is in a moment, the grandfather clause simply snuffed away the right to vote for thousands.

**GD** Hundreds of thousands. So what I - what I can tell you is that, so as the part of the compromise for the states to reenter the union, they had to pass the 13th Amendment, which ended slavery, the 14th Amendment provided equal protection under the laws, and the 15th Amendment said that states could not discriminate based on race in the act of voting. But states use that as a - as an opportunity to say, OK, we'll ratify or adopt the 13th and 14th and 15th Amendments into our state constitutions, and at the same time, we'll also adopt these laws that will eliminate Black men from the voter rolls. And so they - that's when they also adopted things like the poll tax and the literacy tests and vouchers.

**SM** What are vouchers? Did you talk to family members who went through this?

**GD** Yes. So a voucher was another tool that was implemented after the state constitutional conventions in early 1900s. So a voucher was essentially that a white person had to vouch for a Black person in order for them to register or cast a ballot. And I have a story from my friend's grandfather, who worked with the Boy Scouts in New Orleans and went to register and was told that he couldn't register. And so he went back to his employer, a white man, told him he couldn't register, the white man called the register and said... Well, first he told my friend's grandfather to put on his Boy Scout uniform and go back to the registrar and that he would be able to register. And so, the white man called and vouched for my friend's grandfather in order for him to register. So vouchers was an issue, as well is literacy tests. There are stories of persons who were subjected to literacy tests. One is Miss Myrtle Pless Jones, who got a degree from South Carolina State University and a master's degree from

Michigan State University, and she moved to Montgomery, Alabama, married her husband and had two children, and in the 1950s went to register in Montgomery, Alabama. And she was asked how many bubbles in a bar of soap? Her response was over 100. She was told that that number was incorrect, and she was not allowed to register. Literacy tests served as another tool. That was utilized to stop Black and brown people in the south and southwest from registering to vote and - and stopping folk from registering was a big issue, particularly in the 50s and 60s. Because it like they were working from the premise that if they don't register, then they can't vote. And then in places like Texas, they say, well, they can register, but we don't have all white primaries that - you can only, you know, vote in this primary if you're white. And in the Supreme Court, had there were several cases associated with all white primaries in Texas and also destroy that mechanism. So, again, Black and brown people are at every turn being met with these laws that were meant to eliminate them from the voter rolls.

**SM** You write that since the highly contested presidential battle between Bush and Gore 20 years ago in 2000, there's been a proliferation of laws to regulate how people vote, how they get to vote. What kinds of laws since that highly contested presidential election?

**GD** Absolutely. So certainly in 2006, we started to see restrictive voter I.D. laws. Now, prior to 2006, most jurisdictions, you just showed up at your polling place, maybe you had a signature and you were able to cast a ballot. Because remember, prior to the Voting Rights Act, the big issue was registration. So the Voting Rights Act of 1965 eliminated in large part those disparities, so registration was less of a barrier. And so now is actually getting to the polls, and 2006, we saw these restrictive voter I.D. laws. And restrictive voter I.D. laws essentially say there are only a few pieces of identification that someone can use in order to cast a ballot. For example, in a place like Texas, it would only allow for a driver's license, military I.D., passport or a hunting license. So you could be registered. But now if you registered, guess what? Before you can vote, you need to make sure you have those I.D.s. And it was at least three different federal courts said that that law was intentionally discriminatory. And the court found that there were more than 600,000 Black and brown people who did not have a driver's license, military I.D., passport or hunting license.

**SM** Why was it harder for Black or brown people to have such I.D.s?

**GD** One of the primary reasons is because of the cost of underlying documents. Like if you say, that you'd need a driver's license as one of the few modes of identification. In order to get a driver's license, you have to get a birth certificate and there are some - some instances, you know, like my grandmother and others, they weren't born in the hospital. They didn't have a birth certificate. So efforts to get that have been very costly and time consuming. And in order - you can see as in Georgia - also in 2006, Georgia implemented a restrictive voter I.D. and it also at the time knew that approximately 25 percent of its Black citizens did not own a car.

**SM** How do you know it's deliberate and targeting the disenfranchisement of a certain people and not just somebody so highly motivated to make sure there's not one iota of voter fraud that they tighten the laws on that?

**GD** In regard to voter fraud, we have had study after study that says that voter fraud does not exist. And even in the cases, for example, in the Crawford vs. Marion case, which was the Supreme Court case on voter I.D., where there was not one instance of voter fraud. Yet, that was the reason that the state said that it needed a voter I.D. law. Yet it could not

point to any instances of voter fraud. And the same has been true in state, after state, after state. These legislatures are using voter fraud as the rationale for these restrictive laws but cannot point to any instances of voter fraud. It's because it does not exist. But they say it's difficult to prove. But what is not difficult to prove is the level of voter suppression and the number of persons who are not able to cast a ballot because of these laws, like the 600,000 people in Texas. And I would say that it's not necessary to prove that it's intentional. Because we can get the result right, if the result is that 600,000 people are disenfranchised, then that's a reason for us to look at these laws critically and to develop ways in which those eligible persons will have the right to vote. We saw the same thing in North Carolina. The North Carolina legislature essentially said, what ways do Black and brown people utilize to cast a ballot? And they went about, and the court said it used surgical precision in eliminating those mechanisms that Black and brown people use. For example, they put in place a restrictive voter I.D., as opposed to being able to verify your address or verify your identity in other ways. Such is bringing a utility bill to the polling place. They also got rid of Sunday for an early voting day, and that was in direct correlation to the Souls to the Polls efforts of Black churches in North Carolina. On Sundays during the early voting period, Black churches would load up their church busses and take people to the polls. And that's why they called it Souls to the Polls. And it increased - certainly increased turnout and increased participation. So those North Carolina legislatures said let's get rid of Sunday, early voting.

**SM** In 2013 the Supreme Court struck down part of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. What was at issue in that case?

**GD** So at issue in that case was the ability of the act to require certain jurisdictions to submit their voting changes to the attorney general was constitutional. And what the court deliberated about was whether or not the coverage formula was outdated, meaning the coverage formula essentially said, if you had one of these devices, if you had a literacy test, a poll tax, a grandfather clause, or prior to November 1st, 1965, or less than 50 percent of your eligible persons were registered prior to November 1st, 1965, then you would be a covered jurisdiction under the act. And if you were a covered jurisdiction under Section five, you had to submit any voting change to either the attorney general of the United States or the D.C. District Court. And when I say voting change, it's anything from moving a polling place across the street, to a congressional redistricting. Now, those jurisdictions had to submit their changes before they could implement them. So in the Shelby County decision in Shelby County, and the case was brought on behalf of Shelby County, Alabama, which essentially said that this requirement - that they get approval before they could implement the changes, was unconstitutional. It's one other important point is that Section five is a - was a temporary provision that was subject to reauthorization. And the last time it was reauthorized was in 2006 and it was overwhelmingly passed in the House and the Senate like 93 to zero or 94 to zero. And the court overlooked that and essentially said that it was outdated because you remember, the triggering formula was registration rates say like, oh, well, everybody has registration rates that are more than 50 percent now, so there's no need for this. And since 2013, we have certainly seen an uptick in the number of suppressive measures like voter purges, polling place closures, these restrictive voter I.D. laws and other measures that are being utilized certainly to make it harder for people to access the right to vote.

**SM** More than a million Hispanic people were added to the U.S. population over 2011 and 2012. You write that that led to a flurry of laws to regulate who was allowed to vote. What sort of laws emerged from that era?

**GD** Well, we saw the proof of citizenship laws that were certainly focused on naturalized citizens and requiring them to bring additional documentation in order to register and to vote. So that's in direct relation to the changing demographics in our country.

**SM** Your book, "Uncounted: Voter Suppression in the United States", came out in January 2020, before the pandemic hit and millions of Americans were forced to vote by mail rather than risk infection by standing in line on Election Day, they thought. How worried are you now about the possibility that many mail-in ballots will be deliberately invalidated?

**GD** Well, I certainly have concerns because this is new, right? The growth in usage of vote by mail ballots has increased exponentially, in large part because of certainly the COVID-19 pandemic. So I do have concerns because it's new and you have to have millions of people who are utilizing it for the first time. And it is imperative that people follow the instructions. If it says - if the instructions say use black ink, then it's important that you use black ink and that blue ink, because there could be a reason for throwing your ballot out. If it says sign it on the back and you don't sign on the back, they can throw your ballot out. Another reason that ballots are rejected is the signature match. We're already seeing reports of three times as many ballots of Black persons being rejected in the state of North Carolina, due to signature match and other issues. I'm also the litigation director at Advancement Project, and we brought a case in Florida where certainly that was one of our claims, is that there is a higher rejection rate because of signature mismatching in Florida and there's a higher rejection rate for people of color. So though that's where my concern is that there hasn't been enough voter education on what is required and what people need to do to ensure that their vote by mail ballot is counted. But it is so very important that people know to follow the instructions, make sure you have a consistent signature, because when they looking at whether that's your signature matches, they're looking at your driver's license. Now, I know my signature has changed from the one that I have of my driver's license. But in order so - in order for them to know that is it is me who is casting his ballot, I need that signature to be as close to driver's license as I can. And then you can - and knowing that people can track their ballots, make sure to track your ballot. And if it says include email, include an e-mail, if it says include a phone number, include a phone number. Because that's the way they'll contact you if there's a problem, because we want to make sure that your vote counts.

**SM** Have you recently seen any new voter suppression tricks that have surprised even you?

**GD** In regard to new voter suppression tricks, I will just say if I consistently say in my book - there's nothing new. And I think to give you something that my grandmother would say is "the devil ain't got no new tricks", particularly things like long lines that you're seeing in Georgia, people standing in line, eleven hours to vote, in America? Well and there - there are people who say, well, you know, hey, it's the right to vote, that's just what they have to do. It's like really we're supposed to be this beacon of democracy, and that's what we're telling people that, you know, if you want to exercise your right to vote, that you should stand in line, be ready to stand in line eleven hours? Well, for everyone who's looking at those pictures and saying, wow, people are really enthusiastic, and folks are really turning out to vote, I'm afraid that there are five people who are saying I cannot take five hours, six hours, three hours and certainly not eleven hours to stand in line. We should not require people to do that, to participate in democracy. So that certainly concerns me. And it's not new - long lines are new, but we're certainly getting headlines now. I think, you know, Black people have been the miners canary before. We were talking about long lines a

decade ago. And it wasn't until we saw images in Wisconsin, right, of folks standing in line like, wait a minute, this is this is ridiculous. We shouldn't have this.

**SM** Well, Gilda Daniels, I'm so grateful for you taking the time to share your insights on With Good Reason.

**GD** Thank you.

**SM** Gilda Daniels is the author of "Uncounted: Voter Suppression in the United States". She served as a deputy chief in the Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, Voting Section under the Clinton and Bush administrations. She's currently a professor at the University of Baltimore School of Law and the director of Litigation for Advancement Projects National Office. We asked you why you vote, and here's what we've learned.

**AS** This is Chris from Bristow, Virginia. I have been voting since I was first eligible to vote, many, many years ago. I'm now 68, and I consider it a true privilege to be able to do so. Thank you so much. Bye bye.

**AS** Hi, this is Meghan. I live in Charlottesville, Virginia, and I'm voting because voting lets me stand up for my values. It let me do something when it feels like there's so little I can do about so much. And just the act and voting remind me that I have the privilege of having a role. It reminds me of who doesn't have that same privilege and the inequalities that persist in our country. It's a sobering, energizing experience.

**AS** Hi, my name is Joseph Biery from Greene County, Virginia. I vote because it's the best opportunity I've had to speak up and have a voice in the future of my community. Even when it seems that none of the choices being offered is very appealing, I feel I must vote to preserve my right to vote, as they say, use it or lose it.

**SM** Give us a call at 434-253-0396 and tell us why you vote. This is With Good Reason. We'll be right back.

**SM** Welcome back to With Good Reason. From Virginia Humanities. We asked why you vote and here's what you said.

**AS** Hello, my name is Dedee. And why do I vote? I vote because to me, it is the most fundamental part of being a participant in a democracy. I know it sounds kind of corny, but I hold it with great reverence every time I vote and it's just such a fundamental part of being able to participate in democracy.

**AS** Hi, this is Camellia Moses Okpodu. I'm a resident of Norfolk, Virginia, and I vote because many people have made sacrifices to allow me this opportunity to express my opinion. And I think it's part of my civic responsibility. So I vote because I feel I have an obligation if I'm going to try to educate others to - to try to make this a just and humane world, I have to be a participant in the process. So I take it as an honor and a privilege, and I want to make sure that my voice is heard. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to say that I don't feel that my dream is deferred because I have an opportunity to participate in the democratic process in America.

**AS** Hello, my name is Bob and my wife and I live in Norfolk, Virginia. We actually voted yesterday. One of the reasons we voted was we wanted our voices heard. About 25 years ago, a fellow Virginian whose name is Joel Lavine and I participated in a - it was called a

terraforming workshop in California, trying to figure out whether we were capable of changing the atmosphere of Mars so that it would be habitable and Earth-like. At that time, I began to realize that we couldn't even control the temperature of the planet on which we live. And as time has progressed, this is becoming more and more urgent. We voted yesterday because we hope the humans go eventually to Mars because they want to, not because we overcooked our planet. Thank you.

[00:30:17]

**SM** Give us a call at 434-253-0396 and tell us why you vote. The 2020 election has an added complexity, of course, in the pandemic. Jennifer Victor is a professor of political science at George Mason University Schar School of Policy and Government. She joins us to explore the voting concerns caused by the pandemic and the unexpected ways COVID-19 is breaking down some historical voting barriers. Jennifer, we're close to Election Day. Let's talk about the voting process itself. What will be different about this one on the actual Election Day? For one thing, I've heard that there are going to be lots of pens, single use pens available to voters who are writing down their ballots.

**JV** Yeah, I've I heard the other day in one locality, they jerry rigged some system that had to do with Q tips. They needed a way to allow people to sign an electronic screen like with a stylus. And they figured out the Q tips would work. In any case, what it suggests is that local administrators that run elections are professional and trained and they love elections and they - they're problem solvers. You know, voting seems like it should be this cookie cutter straight forward everybody does it the same way, works the same everywhere kind of process. But it's not. You know, one of the things that I think is important to remember in the United States is that we don't actually hold a national election ever, for anything. We've got different rules in every state and in every locality about how it all works. And they develop their own little idiosyncratic processes sometimes and their little procedures for how - to how to troubleshoot problems that people might experience when they're in the process of voting. You brought up the issue of the the poll workers and the poll watchers. And one of the challenges there is that, that is a population that is often older folks. You know, we get a lot of retirees. And of course, that's a population if you're - if you're older than you're at greater risk for COVID. So lots of areas, including the one where I live in Fairfax, Virginia, have been recruiting college students and younger people to be poll workers to help take the place of those older volunteers who may not feel as safe working at the polls on Election Day. I think another thing is that we should probably expect long lines for two reasons. One is that because of social distancing and needing to keep six feet from everybody, that naturally makes a line longer. You know, a line of ten people where everybody is near one another at sort of regular social distance is a much shorter line than one where people are purposefully, deliberately trying to keep their distance from one another. And because of all of the interest in the election this year, in sort of the heightened attention to it and looking at turnout over the last few elections, I think we should anticipate that turnout will be very high.

**SM** Let's say, for instance, it's pouring rain and people who normally would be standing outside are snaking through a long line inside a gymnasium. Will that be allowed, or will people be standing outside social distancing?

**JV** That's going to be one of those decisions that is going to vary from locality to locality. I don't there's not going to be a one way that it gets done everywhere. So local administrators think about all of these various situations that might occur on Election Day and make a plan. If they anticipate rain, then they may have a different sort of direction

that they want the line to go. It can sometimes be hard to make that happen if they don't have enough volunteers who have all the right information about their plans. But in - in lots of places, there's plenty of volunteers and plenty of advance planning where they figure out how to keep everybody safe. And following the local health guidelines regarding the pandemic and making sure everybody gets their chance to cast their ballot.

**SM** This year, there's been much more concern and worry about suppressing the mail-in ballot. So there's concern about removing the drop boxes, removing the blue mailboxes. There's concern about whether certain states might restrict the number of days that you have once you've mailed the ballot for it to still count after the election. Can you talk about that a little bit?

**JV** Yeah, I want to be really clear about this, because I know that there has been some rhetoric out there that undermines, to some extent, people's faith in mail-in ballots or in the validity of using the mail to send in a ballot and whether or not that's a secure way to vote. And so I want to be very clear that based on all of the research and all of the evidence and all of the experience that we have with voting and vote by mail, is that voting by mail is absolutely a secure and safe way to cast a ballot. One of the early suggestions was that there would be so many people voting by mail that the post office wouldn't be able to handle it. And that's simply not true, even if every single American all mailed in their ballot on exactly the same day, that still would not equal a volume of mail that is greater than what the post office handles on a typical day. So the U.S. Postal Service is absolutely equipped to be able to handle the volume, especially spread out over the number of weeks that it is. And the Postal Service is absolutely secure. So if you are a voter who has the opportunity to do a mail-in ballot and you're concerned about COVID and following some quarantine guidelines, then the safest ballot box is on your front porch or at the end of your driveway, it is your own mailbox. And in most states these days, you can go online and see where your ballot is. You can see when it was mailed to you from the state or the county and you can see when it - after you fill it out and put it back in the mail and it goes back to them, you can go online and see that they have actually received it. So you can have that added layer of confidence that voting by mail is = is absolutely safe in a secure way to do it.

**SM** In some ways, it does seem the pandemic is knocking down some historical barriers. Look at how quickly many states, such as Virginia, passed laws to allow early voting without questioning you, why you were voting early or to allow more access to voting by mail.

**JV** Yeah. No, I think that's a great observation. And I sort of hope that some of the liberalization of some voting laws in some states, I hope it sticks. You know, I think there's - there's some chance that these changes will be seen as temporary and they'll go back to a different form after the pandemic is over. But I hope not. I think that allowing more people different ways to vote and more days to vote and vote in person, vote by mail and all of this, and not requiring a witness or whatever it is in your area that that may have been liberalized. Again, it's not liberalized everywhere. For example, in Texas you can't use a student I.D. to vote and you have to have an excuse if you're going to vote by mail. So most Texans will vote on Election Day in person because there just really aren't any other options for - for a lot of the voters there. So some of the sort of optimism that we're talking about in in these expanded opportunities for voting in lots of states, it's not universal. But - but I hope that the trend goes in that direction, because it the more that it goes in that direction, you know, voting and participating in free and fair elections is one of the pillars of democracy. Any sorts of laws that we pass or regulations that expand voting rights and

make it easier for people to participate and that lower the barriers to participating in elections, I think all of those things strengthen our democracy.

**SM** So much at stake. I have to ask you, are you worried about how this election will transpire?

**JV** I am worried about how the results will be perceived. I have a lot of confidence in the actual administration of the election because I have confidence in the professionals that run elections, the county administrators, the secretaries of state, the very - the armies of volunteers that work to operate, polling places and so forth, to the extent that people are worried about the actual administration of the election, I don't worry about that so much because of the level of faith that I have in the local administrators that - that run the process. What scares me is the rhetoric that's out there that undermines people's faith in the process. So as - as soon as Americans stop believing that we have a rule of law that applies to everyone equally, as soon as Americans stop believing that we don't have free and fair elections, that there's rampant election fraud, or if one party believes those things and not the other party, these are really detrimental attitudes to the stability of a democracy. You can't have a democracy if we don't all agree on what the rules are and that the rules are largely being followed and enforced. And as the - the public faith in the process or in the validity and the legitimacy of the process gets undermined either through the rhetoric of elected people or athletes or candidates or through stories that - that crop up in the media about interference or fraud or the mail or whatever. To the extent that there's evidence behind those things, we need to uncover that. And we need to correct for it. But to the extent that those stories spin into conspiracy theories that lack evidence, then the - the damage that those stories do and the rhetoric does to people's faith in democracy is - is really troublesome and can - can be quite destabilizing to a country.

**SM** Well, Jennifer Victor, thank you for sharing your insights on With Good Reason.

**JV** Thank you so much for having me. It's been a pleasure to talk with you.

**SM** Jennifer Victor is a professor of political science at George Mason University. We asked you why you vote and here's what we've learned.

**AS** Hi, my name's Nancy and I live in Charlottesville. So I vote because I believe, like John Lewis did, that voting is our greatest chance at making democracy work. John Lewis said, "don't give up, don't give in". And the last thing he wrote before he died was encouraging people to vote. People died so that we could vote. And that's why I vote. Thank you.

**AS** Hi. My name is Virginia and I live in Arlington, Virginia. I vote because I'm tired of the injustices in our country toward Black people, minorities, women and LGBTQ+ community. Black lives matter. Love is love. Women have a right to choose and pay equality and integration makes our country a beautiful place. Our country can do better and I'm hopeful that it will.

**AS** Hi, I'm Rick and I'm calling from Blacksburg. I vote because climate change really pressing and severe problem that we are not addressing. And for the most part, I think our leaders have it reversed. I think that doing nothing will actually damage the economy and tackling it head on will unleash jobs and innovation. We have to do something, I think, for the sake of our children and our children's children. Thank you.

[00:42:57]

**SM** With a new law allowing no excuse, absentee voting states like Virginia might see drastically different voting than in traditional years. Rosalyn Cooperman breaks down how these new voting rules could shake up the election. Cooperman is a professor of political science at the University of Mary Washington. Rosalyn, what is no excuse absentee voting is that the same thing is early voting in person.

**RC** So no excuse absentee voting is that you can just request a ballot early. You don't have to have a traditional excuse like you are going to be out of town for work on that day. No excuse absentee voting is one where if you would care to vote early as a voter, that's your right to do so. Early voting is different. Early voting allows for an individual to cast their vote ahead of the election. And so typically that is in the county in which they reside, but it allows them to vote early.

**SM** Why should we ever have had to recite a reason why we couldn't stand in long lines on Election Day to vote?

**RC** Well, you know, I think that what it comes down to is this. If we think that voting is important, it's one of our rights as a U.S. citizen, it's something that should be widely available. It should be encouraged. And so I'm very happy when I see examples of states moving to remove voter barriers. Ours is a political system that tends to put up barriers to vote. For example, the absence of early voting requires people to show up at a specific day and time. With early voting, that is removing one of the barriers to voting so that people can take care of it when it's on their mind, you know, when it's convenient for them to do so. It doesn't change the outcome of their vote, but it increases the likelihood of their voting, if we make it easier for our U.S. citizens to do so.

**SM** Do most states have no excuse absentee ballots and early voting?

**RC** It just varies tremendously from state to state. So, for example, a state that primarily has voters vote by mail, the issue of early voting or absentee voting, excuse or no excuse, is kind of beside the point. And so there's just a lot of variation from state to state in terms of what voting looks like.

**SM** Why is it that no excuse absentee voting and early voting allowed in some states and some of these other measures is seen as favoring the Democrats as opposed to simply being a good idea for ease of voting for all voters?

**RC** I don't know that I have a good answer for that, because we know, for example, that voting by mail, political science research shows that there's not really an advantage that accrues to one party over another. If you look at campaign websites from both Democrats and Republicans, you know, these candidates and their campaigns are very clear about the value of voting to make sure that their supporters get out and vote. At the end of the day, elections are won and lost by who gets out to vote.

**SM** Is there a trend toward states allowing voters to vote several days ahead of the election at their convenience?

**RC** Unfortunately, what I would say is there's more, frankly, of a trend at the state level towards matters of voter suppression, where instead of reducing the barriers to vote, there are concerted efforts made to increase the barriers to voting and, in fact, making it very difficult for individuals to vote. Georgia, North Dakota, Wisconsin, for example, that have

actually increased barriers to voting. There are trends of trying to remove people from the voting rolls, so making it more difficult for people to vote because they would have been taken off of the existing voter ballots. So one of the examples that I recall - this was from the state of Georgia, where there were instances where individuals would on their - their driver's license or their government issued ID if their full middle name was identified. But on the voter roll, it had the first initial or the initial of their middle name. There were challenges made to the veracity of whether or not that individual was the same person. And so really at the state level, you're seeing two trends. One, some states that are trying to actually remove or reduce the barriers to vote, and other states that seem to be increasing the barriers to vote.

**SM** So if people haven't voted yet and they're worried about trying to cast a ballot that is counted and counted promptly, what do you suggest for them.

**RC** To make sure that they understand what is being asked of them. What are what is available to them? Can you go vote early? Is that an option for you? Can you only vote by mail? What is required of you? Is there an a middle envelope, for example, that you have to put your ballot on? Where do you sign the ballot to identify that it's you, that you're voting in good faith and that you're in charge of your ballot? Right. So it's very important to understand what your state requires. By way of voting and to be thinking about it now, if one hasn't already begun thinking about it. And this is where the state board of elections are going to be a very important source of information for individuals. Their goal is to administer elections and I would encourage folks who have not yet thought about this - you can go to your state board of elections to see how voting works in your state. Make sure that you understand and recognize the options available to you. Make sure that you're registered to vote, for example. That becomes a starting point for folks who haven't even thought about or who may actually not be registered to vote because, again, voting registration is not automatic in our country. But to make sure that they understand the options available to them and to very closely follow those directions to ensure that your vote is counted.

**SM** Rosalyn Cooperman is a professor of political science at the University of Mary Washington. Why are With Good Reasons, friends and neighbors voting? Here are just a few reasons.

**AS** Hi, my name's Angie and I live and vote in Albemarle County, Virginia. I vote because as a child, my grandmother taught me about the women's suffrage movement. I learned from her that women fought for many years to have the right to vote. And therefore, as a woman in this democracy, I will always use my right to vote. Because it was so hard earned by the women before me and my grandmother instilled this value in me. Thank you.

**AS** Hi, my name is Mark and I'm from Arlington. I vote and I've always voted since 1970, both because it's my duty as a citizen, I believe, and also it's my affirmation of and belief in this most imperfect union. Thank you.

**AS** Hi, I'm Aiden and I'm calling from Leesburg. I'm voting because of the many activists who have bought the rights for LGBTQ+ community. Without them, I wouldn't be able to work, live or love freely in this country. We've made significant strides, but we still have a long way to go. I won't let their action be undone by my apathy.

**AS** Hi, my name is Jonathan and I vote because I think voting makes a difference. I think our community locally and nationally and internationally needs to have my voice as much as anyone else's voice in trying to promote a better America, a more integrated America to fight the disparities of racism and all the other isms that exist. Thank you. Please vote.

**SM** We want to hear from you. Call us at 434-253-0396 and tell us why you vote. Major support for *With Good Reason* is provided by the University of Virginia Health System, pioneering treatments to save lives and preserve brain function for stroke patients. [UVAHealth.com](http://UVAHealth.com). *With Good Reason* is produced in Charlottesville by Virginia Humanities, which acknowledges the Monacan nation, the original people of the land and waters of our home in Charlottesville, Virginia. Our production team is Alison Quants, Matt Darroch, Lauren Francis, Jamal Millner and Aiden Carroll. For the podcast go to [withgoodreasonradio.org](http://withgoodreasonradio.org). I'm Sarah McConnell. Thanks for listening.